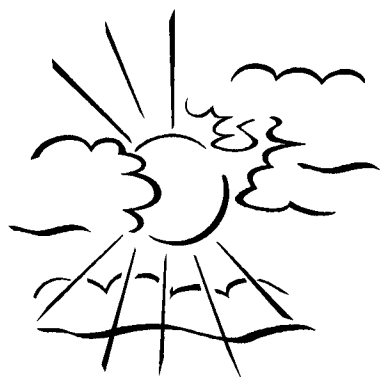


***Department  
of  
Human  
Services***

Prepared by the  
DHS Office of  
Communications  
(517) 373-7394



# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Wednesday, December 14, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
*Welfare Reform	2-11
*Background Checks	12-13
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	14-26
Health Care	27-31
Child Support	32
Legislative Wrap Up	33-34
Energy Assistance	35-36
Food Assistance	37-40
Charities	41'-50
State Employees	51-52

\*Important story at this spot

Michigan Report

December 13, 2005

## **LEGISLATURE PASSES WELFARE OVERHAUL**

While there were still disagreements late into Tuesday on how best to serve the state's poorest, the Legislature passed a major overhaul of the system that would focus on individual assessment with the condition of accountability by providing a 48-month lifetime limit and sanctions of up to two years.

The House voted expectedly bipartisan on the set of welfare reform bills. Of the Democrats that joined the Republican majority, many hail from competitive election districts.

Final approval was more divided in the Senate, where critics charged both that the package was too limiting in allowing some people to stay on welfare, and where the package was criticized for hurting the mentally ill.

Republicans and Democrats still clashed on setting a lifetime limit, as well as placing sanctions on people who fall out of compliance with the requirements of the cash-assistance program. Republican amendments to Senate substitutes of the House bills tie-barred the 48-month limit (HB 5438) to eligibility requirements for the Work First program (SB 892) and tie-barred the three-strike sanctions (HB 5441) to the Supplemental Security Income legislation (HB 5439). The other bills, HB 5440 and HB 5442, are not tie-barred to anything and the Senate bills were concurred in with no additional changes.

"I can only label this package of bills as being unfair and unreasonable," said Rep. Brenda Clack (D-Flint), adding that the proposal might be more viable, "If we were living in a state with a vibrant economy, if we lived in a state where everyone who wants to work could find a job."

She concluded by saying, "We don't live in that state."

But Republicans adamantly believe that a program that provides additional resources for those on welfare should be coupled with additional sanctions to make people who want to succeed and move off the system be able to do so.

"This package of bills provides increased resources with increased accountability, that's what it's really about," said Rep. Jerry Kooiman (R-Grand Rapids).

Mr. Kooiman said since the whole effort was started months ago, Republicans have compromised with the administration by removing the three-strikes and your out rule (it is now 90 days for the first two sanctions and two years for the third) and having a 48-month lifetime limit for all people on cash assistance (now it only applies to able-bodied adults).

“While we disagree on a couple of elements on this proposal, I believe we have taken great steps in accomplishing elements the administration wanted,” he said.

However, House Democrats don’t believe Republicans compromised enough, leaving people in the system under the proposal at a loss when their time limit runs out. If the bills are signed into law by Governor Jennifer Granholm, people who have been on the cash-assistance program for 36 months or more would have a year to move off the rolls, or two years depending on any extenuating circumstances a particular individual faces.

“It is my belief it is still a work in progress and we have more work to do,” said Rep. Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor). “This will not make it into statute.”

Mr. Kolb called for a continuation of the existing program for a reasonable time, so that lawmakers could come back to the table and address their issues further on welfare reform.

The roll-call vote went as follows HB 5438 (63-44); HB 5439 (60-48); HB 5440 (63-44); HB 5441 (62-46); HB 5442 (100-8); SB 892 (69-39); SB 893 (69-38) and SB 894 (68-40).

## Heat Fizzles Out Of Welfare

The Legislature passed a welfare reform package viewed as undesirable by the administration and, in doing so, didn't give the Governor an easy out of the situation.

The House held onto a one-year extension bill that would easily let Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** veto the House-Senate package without affecting the current rules and penalty structure for the state's welfare system, which expire at the end of the year.

The safety net bill, **SB 0757**, introduced by Sen. Shirley **JOHNSON** (R-Troy) and passed the Senate last week, would have extended the Welfare sunset another year, leaving the current rules and sanctions as they are.

However, rather than giving Granholm an easy way out by letting her sign safety legislation so the Legislature could go back to the drawing table until the bills were reformed to meet her specifications, House Republicans kept the bill under lock and key.

This sets the stage for an administrative nightmare for the Department of Human Services (DHS). If the bills are vetoed, all people exempt from the Work First Program will no longer be exempt, which means there could be a registration flood at Work First. A veto would also prevent anyone breaking the rules and not participating in the program from being punished because it would take out sanctions for those violating welfare rules and regulations.

So, the department could potentially have a lot of rule-breaking people who can't be punished, putting DHS officials in a position of parent without power.

*MIRS* asked House Speaker Craig **DeROCHE** (R-Novi) if the Legislature meant to put the Governor in a spot with their actions.

"That's not the intent," he said. "The intent is to pass through reasonable legislation that we hope the Governor will sign. This is very thoughtful legislation."

He described the bills as "compassionate" legislation that helps put people back to work by giving them the tools they need to succeed.

Rep. Chris **KOLB** (D-Ann Arbor) didn't see it that way. He argued that he had particular problems with a Republican proposal that boots a person off welfare for two years after their third sanction.

"This hurts the children of these families, just not the individual receiving the sanction," Kolb said.

The rest of the welfare package was passed with very few changes. None of the most controversial pieces — the 48-year limit, sanction guidelines, exemptions — changed enough to please those shouting the loudest against them (See *MIRS*, 12/8/05, "[Welfare Agreement, Are You Out There?](#)").

On all of the House-introduced welfare bills, Johnson and Sen. Laura **TOY** (R-Livonia) voted no with the Dems. Sens. Jim **BARCIA** (D-Bay City), Dennis **OLSHOVE** (D-Warren) and Mark **SCHAUER** (D-Battle Creek) voting yes with Republicans. The bills passed 23-14. The exception was **HB 5442**, sponsored by Rep. Richard **BALL** (Laingsburg), which passed unanimously in the Senate.

Johnson was the only Republican who voted no on all Senate-sponsored welfare reform bills. SB 0892, sponsored by Sen. Bill HARDIMAN (R-Kentwood) passed the Senate 24-13. SB 0893, sponsored by Sen. Alan CROPSEY (R-DeWitt), passed the Senate 31-5 and SB 0894, sponsored by Sen. Irma CLARK-COLEMAN (D-Detroit), passed 32-5.

In the House, the welfare bills passed along party lines with the entire Republican caucus voting in favor of the bills and a spattering of vulnerable Democrats joining them. Reps. Kathy ANGERER (D-Dundee), Pam BYRNES (D-Chelsea), Andy DILLON (D-Redford Twp.), John ESPINOZA (D-Croswell), Jeff MAYES (D-Saginaw), Gary McDOWELL (D-Rudyard), Joel SHELTROWN (D-West Branch), and Dudley SPADE (D-Tipton) voted for most of the House bills.

They were joined in the Senate bills by Reps. Frank ACCAVITTI (D-Eastpointe), Ed CLEMENTE (D-Lincoln Park), Mike SAK (D-Grand Rapids) and Lisa WOJNO (D-Warren).

Dec 13, 10:24 PM EST

## **Lawmakers approve four-year welfare limit, but veto likely**

By AMY F. BAILEY  
Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- The most significant reforms to the state's welfare program since the 1990s won approval Tuesday from the Republican-controlled Legislature, but Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm may veto the bills.

On Tuesday night, the House and Senate voted mostly along party lines to approve a bill that would limit most recipients to four years of cash assistance. Other bills in the package would provide recipients more time to get an education and pursue job training opportunities.

The new version of the legislation would allow most people who now have been on the welfare rolls for at least three years to continue receiving assistance until 2008. The limit would not apply to the disabled, those who are taking care of a disabled relative and the mentally ill.

Granholm is worried that a lifetime limit on cash assistance will hurt recipients who are following the education and training requirements of the program but need the benefits because they are in poverty, spokeswoman Liz Boyd said.

"If people are playing by the rules we should not be denying them the assistance they gravely need," Boyd said Tuesday night. "It would essentially be playing a game of chicken with people's lives."

Republican supporters of the legislation have argued that setting a limit on cash assistance would help motivate those receiving welfare checks to get the training needed to work in a long-term job rather than one that pays minimum wage.

Setting stringent penalties for noncompliance would make recipients accountable for the average \$415 monthly payment they get per household from the program, some Republicans said.

"We're all about moving people out of welfare and being efficient with taxpayer money," said Rep. Jerry Kooiman, a Grand Rapids Republican who helped develop the bills.

Lawmakers also approved legislation that would set up a new three-strike policy for recipients who fail to comply with work or training requirements. The first and second offenses would mean 90 days without cash assistance and a third strike would mean a two-year ban on aid.

The Legislature finished work on the bills Tuesday, the last day lawmakers are scheduled to be at the Capitol before adjourning for the year. Several provisions in the current welfare law expire on Dec. 31, including those that spell out which groups can be exempt from work requirements and lay out sanctions for those who aren't complying with work requirements.

If Granholm vetoes the bills, those provisions will expire. That will mean people who are now exempt from work requirements will be notified that they have to comply with the same guidelines able-bodied recipients must follow. However, they will not be penalized for failing to comply because the sanction provision of the law also expires at the end of the year.

Rep. Chris Kolb, an Ann Arbor Democrat who negotiated some terms of the bills, said he would like to see lawmakers approve legislation that would extend the expiration date of the provisions due to end in a few weeks. But that does not appear likely.

Kolb said he is committed to resuming work on welfare reforms in 2006.

"There are differences, but those differences - if we truly want to resolve them - are resolvable," Kolb said.

The four-year limit on cash assistance won approval on a 63-44 vote in the House and a 23-14 in the Senate.

In the House, seven Democrats voted for it with all but two of the Republicans. Only Democrats voted against the bill. GOP House Speaker Craig DeRoche of Novi and Rep. Fran Amos, R-Waterford, missed the vote. The Democrats who voted for the bill were: Kathy Angerer of Dundee, Pam Byrnes of Dexter, Andy Dillon of Redford Township, John Espinoza of Croswell, Jeff Mayes of Bay City, Dudley Spade of Tipton and Joel Sheltrown of West Branch.

In the Senate, Democrats Jim Barcia of Bay City, Dennis Olshove of Warren and Mark Schauer of Battle Creek joined 20 Republicans in voting for the limit. Twelve Democrats and two Republicans - Shirley Johnson of Troy and Laura Toy of Livonia - voted against it.

Also Tuesday, lawmakers also approved a measure that would ask voters to decide next fall whether to change the state constitution to bar governments from forcing private landowners to sell their property if the land will be used for economic development or increased tax revenues. The resolution is intended to strengthen the rights of property owners in the wake of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that let a Connecticut town force homeowners to relinquish property for a commercial project.

The Legislature also gave final approval Tuesday to bills that would give whistleblowers the power to sue a Medicaid provider on the state's behalf to fight fraud and codify an earlier negotiated deal to give a number of responsibilities to the Mackinac Bridge Authority that had been shifted to the Michigan Department of Transportation.

---

The welfare bills are House Bills 4121 and 5438-46; Senate Bills 892-94.

---

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Michigan League for Human Services: <http://www.milhs.org>

© 2005 The Associated Press.

Published December 14, 2005  
Lansing State Journal

## **State Legislature approves sweeping welfare reform**

Associated Press

The most significant reforms to the state's welfare program since the 1990s won approval Tuesday from the Republican-controlled Legislature, but Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm may veto the bills.

On Tuesday night, the House and Senate voted mostly along party lines to approve a bill that would limit most recipients to four years of cash assistance. Other bills in the package would provide recipients more time to get an education and pursue job training opportunities.

The legislation would allow most people who now have been on the welfare rolls for at least three years to continue receiving assistance until 2008. The limit would not apply to the disabled, those who are taking care of a disabled relative and the mentally ill.

Granholm is worried that a lifetime limit on cash assistance will hurt recipients, spokeswoman Liz Boyd said.



# Schwarz to vote for spending bill

Eric J. Greene

*The Enquirer*

Although he faces pressure from organized labor and is the subject of a prayer vigil today at his own church, U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz said Tuesday he intends to vote for a federal budget bill that opponents claim would hurt poor people.

Despite what critics claim about the legislation, Schwarz said the bill decelerates — but doesn't cut — spending on food stamps, Medicaid and other programs designed to help low-income citizens.

"All that the Congress is trying to do ... is to slow the growth of spending, but spending continues to increase," said Schwarz, R-Battle Creek. "We took a bill which was totally unsatisfactory and I think made it quasi-satisfactory."

But that answer doesn't satisfy the leader of the Battle Creek-based Joint-religious Organizing Network for Action and Hope, who contends the needs of the poverty-stricken are growing more quickly than federal spending.

"Yes, spending might be increasing because cost is increasing ... but if it's a cut to the service people get, I would say that's a cut," said JONAH's president, the Rev. Charlie Farnum, pastor at Maple United Methodist Church. Among JONAH's associate members is Michael McCullough, executive editor of the Battle Creek Enquirer.

Today's prayer vigil, planned for 12:30 p.m. in the sanctuary at St. Philip Catholic Church, where Schwarz worships, is part of a national series of events religious groups are hosting this week to pressure Congress to help poor people. At the center of the debate is a budget bill that addresses a host of programs, including food stamps and Medicaid, a health care plan for the poor and disabled. Schwarz voted for the first version of the bill; a revised version is expected to come back before the House and Senate in the coming weeks.

"We understand there's a need to cut things in the budget, but we don't think we should start with the people on the low end of the income scale," Farnum said. The Rev. Chuck Fischer of St. Philip, which is a member of JONAH, said he's opposed to the budget bill as proposed.

"It's kind of taking advantage of the group that has the least political clout," Fischer said. "This maybe isn't really good public policy — it's just simply an easy way out of a problem."

However, Schwarz said he intends to vote again for the bill because Republican leaders have made several changes to the legislation that he and other members requested. He said he wouldn't vote for the bill if his requested changes were removed or if the final version contains a provision for oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

"If I didn't vote for the House version of that bill, after very aggressively going after leadership and committee chairs involved to make the changes, the next time I need changes in a bill I wouldn't get them," Schwarz said.

"I understand that that concept is a little difficult for people to assimilate, but nevertheless that is the case."

Farnum said he expects about 50 people to attend today's vigil, which is preceded with a soup luncheon at noon at St. Thomas Episcopal Church. Separately, labor unions also are trying to corner Schwarz and other members of Congress before the House and Senate vote again. They're using a combination of television ads, billboards, phone calls and mailers to publicize their contention that the budget bill, as written, would cut funding for the poor to pay for tax breaks for the rich.

At 10 a.m. today at the First Pentecostal Church of God in Christ, Al Garrett, with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, will call on Schwarz to "buck the GOP leadership and vote against its Draconian tax and budget plan," according to a press release. Garrett is expected to be joined by several local Democrats and will participate in a similar event at 1 p.m. today in Kalamazoo to target U.S. Rep. Fred Upton, R-St. Joseph.

Messages left for AFSCME officials were not returned Tuesday.

Schwarz questioned why labor unions, which generally consider him a friend, would target him and other moderate Republicans.

"The strategy to me is a little unusual, but nobody ever expected — and certainly I don't expect — politics to be a rational, logical, nuanced sort of an enterprise. It's not. It's emotional, with bursts here and there, that sometimes are bewildering, but you just play over them," Schwarz said.

*Eric J. Greene is metro editor. He can be reached at 966-0687 or [egreene@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:egreene@battlecr.gannett.com). Read his blog in the News Extras area at [battlecreekenquirer.com](http://battlecreekenquirer.com).*

Originally published December 14, 2005

Editorial

## **The Senator Who Cried Wolf**

The New York Times

Published: December 14, 2005

Strange things are afoot as Congress presses to end this year's woefully inadequate session by the weekend: coverage of impotence drugs has been restored in a Medicare budget proposal, while an emergency subsidy to help poor people pay their heating bills this winter is getting only anemic financing. But the biggest money issue being haggled over - the House and Senate dispute over cutting up to \$50 billion in spending from assorted vital programs - is somehow tangled up in the Bush administration's insistence on drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

The House has already rejected this perennial chestnut on the anti-environmental agenda, but Senator Ted Stevens, the Alaska Republican, is making tooth-and-claw vows to prevail in the final negotiations. He will be one of the chief bargainers on the final compromise, and he insists that he won't sign off on any deal that omits Alaskan drilling. So what if important issues are on the table - like proposed harmful cuts in food stamps for the poor?

Clearly, damage to food stamps and the other draconian House cuts - in Medicaid, welfare child-support enforcement, student loans, etc. - should be rejected. This is particularly true in the context of the Republican leaders' parallel priority of enacting still more administration tax cuts to warm the hearts of the nation's most affluent this winter. But political negotiations in Washington inevitably involve posturing, and Senator Stevens has stepped forward as this season's Pagliacci of a posturer.

Alaska drilling should never be palmed off as a money-saving measure, but that is the sleight-of-hand being attempted. House moderates who oppose the drilling as well as the welfare cuts must stand fast.

They should keep in mind the senator's earlier melodramatic vow to resign from public office if pork money was rescinded for Alaska's notorious bridges to nowhere. An embarrassed Congress nevertheless scuttled the requirement to build the bridges. Alas, Senator Stevens remains at work.

## **Senate Passes Background Check**

Anyone who works or applies to work in an adult foster care home or an old age facility will have to undergo and pass a federal fingerprint check, according to legislation passed in the Senate today.

The Senate passed SB 0621, sponsored by Sen. Patty BIRKHOLZ (R-Saugatuck) and SB 0622, sponsored by Sen. Tony STAMAS (R-Midland) unanimously after Sen. Deb CHERRY (D-Burton) got the same amendment tacked onto both bills.

Cherry's amendment holds facilities liable in civil cases where an employee who was not given a background check contributes to a patient's death or caused harm. Cherry's amendment comes after an Ann Arbor facility was not found liable in a recent Court of Appeals case when one of its employees sexually assaulted a 19-year-old woman with closed head injuries.

"Nursing home patients are frequently incapable of protecting themselves and are often completely dependent on the professionalism and ethics of the in-patient facility," Cherry said. "This measure will help make sure that if a facility doesn't follow the letter of the law, there will be consequences."

Cherry's amendment was added unexpectedly and threw the Republicans for a loop. After the majority of them voted for the amendment, they called for a recount and then, once they understood the political blunder of recalling their votes, withdrew the request.

Republicans let their yes votes on Cherry's amendment stand with hopes that it gets scratched in the House.

According to SB 0621 and SB 0622, background checks need to be done before employees are hired and need to be continued throughout their employment. Anyone convicted of a crime will not be allowed to work in the center for a period of time that will be determined by the conviction.

People currently working in these facilities have two years to get background checks.

Sen. Irma CLARK-COLEMAN (D-Detroit) offered an amendment that would have given those with criminal backgrounds a chance to present their case in front of an appeals board. The ability to appeal would be based on the person's conviction.

"There must be employment opportunities for non-violent people who want to be contributing members of society," Clark-Coleman said.

Birkholz opposed the amendment stating that people can make an appeal to the department. Adding an appeals board would just add more bureaucracy to the process, she said. The Clark-Coleman amendment did not pass.

The Senate also passed:

- HB 5480, sponsored by Rep. Chris WARD (R-Brighton), which gives \$1 million to projects and security related to the upcoming Super Bowl that will be held in Detroit.

- HB 5270, sponsored by Rep. Rick JONES (R-Grand Ledge), which amends the Penal Code so police officers can point a gun at someone when they're in the line of duty, an allowance that was illegal under current Penal Code rules. The bill passed 32-6.

Michigan Report

December 13, 2005

## **SENATE ADDS CIVIL LIABILITY TO NURSING HOME CHECKS**

Nursing homes and adult foster care facilities would be prohibited from employing persons who did not pass criminal background checks, and could be subject to both criminal and civil liability if they do employ those persons or fail to conduct the required check, under legislation that passed the Senate Tuesday.

The civil liability provisions were added to SB 621 and SB 622 on the floor as the chamber passed both bills unanimously.

Both bills require that a nursing home, adult foster care center, or other facility that provides care for who would be considered vulnerable adults would be required to conduct criminal background checks of employee applicants.

Most individuals with a criminal record would be ineligible for employment if it had not been at least 15 years since a person had completed the probation and parole requirements of their sentence.

The bills originally said that a facility could face criminal liability if they did not conduct the background checks, but were amended to add civil liability if a resident were injured or killed by a person who either would have been fired or not hired if the center had conducted a criminal check.

# Day care shut down after abuse charge

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

WYOMING -- State regulators have ordered a Wyoming day-care provider to close her doors after a child in her care made claims of a sexual assault that allegedly occurred in her home. The state Tuesday suspended the license of Mary Walters, 349 Holly St. SW, after investigating a complaint of alleged abuse made by one child at the day care. The sexual assault investigation does not involve Walters, authorities said.

The Department of Human Services opened its probe Thursday, and Wyoming police have forwarded a report of its investigation to the Kent County Prosecutor's office for possible criminal charges.

Authorities would not disclose the age or gender of the child allegedly assaulted.

Walters has been licensed to care for 12 children since 2002. A 2004 inspection revealed three minor violations at the home, including a hot tub cover that was not locked when children were at the home.

Walters also was told to establish a written plan of evacuation and to update her first-aid certification.

This investigation comes two weeks after the state closed an in-home day care on Grand Rapids' Northeast Side.

In that case, Kristopher Cross, the husband of Amanda Cross, allegedly sexually assaulted at least three girls cared for at their 2642 Fuller Ave. home.

# Boy Found Wandering Near Car Wash

## *Grandfather Taken Into Custody*

POSTED: 6:22 pm EST December 13, 2005

LINCOLN PARK, Mich. -- A grandfather was arrested after a 4-year-old boy was found wandering alone in his pajamas in Lincoln Park Tuesday afternoon, Local 4 reported. Witness Rachel Duncan said she found the boy while she was at a car wash near Dix and Goddard roads, Local 4 reported. She said she realized he was alone and called 911. "In these temperatures, that little boy ... was so cold," said Duncan. Duncan said the boy was "exhausted" and "dirty." She said she asked him if he was hungry. "Honestly, I wanted to take him home," said Duncan. "It just broke my heart to see that." Lincoln Park Police Chief Thomas Karnes said the boy was wearing his pajamas and no socks. He was able to point out his home, which was a second-story apartment, according to police. Karnes said officers "believed that he wasn't being properly supervised." Karnes said Dix is a seven-lane, 30 mph road, and the boy was close to the roadway. "You're inviting tragedy when something like that happens," said Karnes. The boy was placed in the custody of child protective services.

*Copyright 2005 by [ClickOnDetroit.com](http://ClickOnDetroit.com).*

# Father of dead child confused after reading wife's confession

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

By Ken Kolker  
The Grand Rapids Press

BELDING -- The memory is as vivid as it is confusing.

Robert Nash's wife, Amy, carried their 3-month-old daughter, Janie, back to bed after a long, restless night. Janie was born with birth defects, but it was a cold that kept her up crying.

"She was kissing her on the forehead, running her fingers through her hair, telling her she loved her," he said Tuesday. "That doesn't seem like the act of a woman about to kill her child.

"That's why I'm so confused about all this."

Nash, 32, said he doesn't know what to believe after his wife, Amy Jo Nash, 22, was ordered Friday to stand trial for second-degree murder in Janie's death March 13. The death originally was ruled accidental -- asphyxiation, perhaps a case of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Now, police are saying his wife intentionally left her baby face-down on a pillow in her crib to die. The crime is punishable by up to life in prison.

Ionia County Prosecutor Ron Schafer said it could be viewed as a mercy killing, but not to help the child.

"It was not mercy on the baby," he said. "It was to relieve her own problems."

Janie was the couple's only child together. He is an unemployed press operator. She is an East Kentwood High School dropout, the former Amy Lofquist, who worked until recently as a motel housekeeper, he said.

They married last year. He had two young children from another marriage; she had a daughter from a previous relationship.

They knew before Janie was born at Spectrum Health Butterworth Campus in Grand Rapids that she would have Spina Bifida, a spinal condition that leads to nerve damage and leg paralysis. She had club feet and water on her brain.

Janie spent six weeks in the hospital's neonatal unit. Nash said he and his wife instantly fell in love with Janie, whom he described as a good baby.

Overnight on March 12, they argued over whose turn it was to get up with Janie, who was congested and crying, he said. The baby slept in the couple's bedroom. Nash said he fed Janie a bottle the next morning, then told his wife to put her back to bed. He said he left to buy parts for his car.

He returned to their apartment about an hour later to find his wife on the couch, he said.

She went to check on Janie, then screamed her husband's name and yelled for help from the bedroom, he said. Janie was warm but not breathing when her mother carried her into the living room, he said. He said he performed CPR for 15 minutes on the couch.

"She's dead; there's nothing else I can do," he recalled saying.

He said he left Janie on the couch, grabbed his son Devon, 3, and stepdaughter Jade, 2, and left while calling 911. He couldn't get through, so he called his mother, who called police. An



ambulance was pulling into the apartment complex, but he kept going, taking the children to his mother's house, he said.

His wife cried a lot after the death and told relatives. "I killed my daughter. If I didn't lay her in the crib, she'd still be alive," Nash recalled her saying.

Amy Nash was arrested in November.

Robert Nash said he doesn't know why police reopened the investigation. He said he doesn't believe she purposely killed their daughter.

"I feel it's more negligence," he said. "It doesn't fit what she did."

Nash said he visited his wife about a half-dozen times at the Ionia County Jail, but stopped last week after reading her written confession.

Amy Nash's grandmother, Helen Lofquist, of Caledonia, said she doesn't believe her granddaughter deliberately killed the baby, despite the confession.

"I think this is something they coerced her into saying, and that's what she said," said Lofquist, who has visited Nash in jail.

# Youth Home Manager Learns Fate For Sex Charges

## *Chesterfield Township Man Sentenced To Prison*

POSTED: 7:19 am EST December 14, 2005

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. -- A Chesterfield Township man who pleaded no contest to charges of criminal sexual conduct and child sexually abusive activity is sentenced to at least 20 years in prison.

Timothy Myers (pictured, right), 32, was charged in June with 26 counts, including possessing and distributing child pornography.

Myers previously worked as the boy's youth group leader at the First Baptist Church on Van Dyke Avenue in Washington Township, according to the Macomb County Sheriff's Department. He had since relocated to Manistique, Mich., where he was working as a group home manager for troubled children at the Indian River Teaching Family Home, the Sheriff's Department said. Authorities said Myers produced and distributed the child pornography from his wife's parents' home and from Manistique.

Myers was initially charged with a single count of manufacturing and distribution of child sexually abusive material, the Sheriff's Department said. Further investigation revealed that Myers was depicted in several of the images, committing first-degree and second-degree criminal sexual conduct on boys, the Sheriff's Department said.

No-contest pleas are not admissions of guilt, but are treated as such for sentencing purposes.

# Ice Cream Man Learns Fate For Showing Girls Porn

## *Man Sentenced To Prison*

POSTED: 4:30 pm EST December 13, 2005

An ice cream truck driver who was arrested last summer for showing pornographic images to young girls in Macomb Township was sentenced to prison Tuesday.

Michael Wesley Cain (pictured, right), of Detroit, was charged with two counts of accosting children for immoral purposes and two counts of exhibiting obscenity to children, according to the Macomb County Sheriff's Department.

Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said his deputies were called to the area of 21 Mile and Garfield roads on a report of the ice cream truck driver showing pornographic images to young girls. The driver was accused of showing nude photographs of himself on his cell phone to the children, and asked the girls to kiss each other so he could photograph them, the sheriff's department said.

The girls were offered free ice cream if they complied with the man's requests, according to the sheriff's department. They told authorities that the incident had occurred before.

Additional deputies were informed of the incident and the truck was discovered a few days later in the area of 21 Mile and Tilch roads, the sheriff's department said. The driver was identified as Cain and was confronted about the allegations.

Cain allowed deputies to search his cell phone, and they discovered naked photographs of the man, which were consistent with information from witnesses, the sheriff's department said.

Cain pleaded guilty to the charges, according to Local 4. He was sentenced in Macomb County Circuit Court to one to eight years at the Michigan Department of Corrections, with 86 days credit, according to Local 4.

# **Sturgis man guilty**

## ***Quick decision from jury in criminal sexual conduct case***

**By Corky Emrick**  
Sturgis Journal

12/10/05

CENTREVILLE — A 30-year-old Sturgis man was found guilty of first-degree criminal sexual conduct Friday by a St. Joseph County jury.

Brian Lee Wilcox will be sentenced at 10 a.m. Jan. 13. Wilcox had been accused of having a sexual relationship with a female under age 13.

Wilcox had a sexual relationship with the child in July 2004 in Sturgis.

St. Joseph County Prosecutor Douglas Fisher said computer pornography, some of it child pornography, helped convince the jury.

Prosecuting the case was St. Joseph County Assistant Prosecutor Holly Curtis. The jury needed about 15 minutes to reach their verdict.

"Holly prosecuted a very level-headed and methodical case," Fisher said.

Fisher also credited investigative work by Sturgis Police Officers Matt Monroe, Det./Sgt. Rich Johnson and Bill Lentz.

"The investigation done by these officers was great," Fisher said.

Wilcox, who had been free on bond, was taken into custody and will be held in the St. Joseph County Jail until his sentencing.

The verdict was the second felony trial this week in St. Joseph County Circuit Court.

"In my 19 years here, this is the first time we've had two capital felony verdicts in one week," Fisher said.

# **Child predator sentenced to 20 years for molesting boys**

## **Man thanks prosecutors for preventing further damage.**

PUBLISHED: December 14, 2005

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A 32-year-old man convicted of sexually assaulting two boys thanked law enforcement officials Tuesday for catching him before he could assault more victims.

"Thank you for stopping me before more damage could have been done," Timothy Myers said in a letter to assistant Macomb prosecutor Chad Davis before his sentencing to at least 20 years in prison Tuesday.

Myers, who lived in Chesterfield Township with his wife and children, was sentenced in Macomb County Circuit Court on 26 charges related to photographing himself engaging in sex acts with two boys below the age of 10 in separate incidents. He distributed the photographs over the Internet, and distributed hundreds of other child photos over the Internet from a computer in his mobile home and in another residence in northern Michigan.

"This is the first time I've ever had a client say to me, 'I'm glad they caught me,'" said Myers' defense attorney, Steven Freers. "The situation was out of control and it was escalating."

While standing in front of Judge Richard Caretti, Myers apologized to the victims, both of whom have suffered psychological damage and are undergoing counseling, officials said.

"I would give my life to the victims," Myers said in a quiet voice.

The sentence fell at the maximum end of sentencing guidelines. Caretti said he considered exceeding the recommendation but "somewhat reluctantly agreed" to remain within them.

The judge also scolded Myers.

"Your wide array of various offenses are truly reprehensible," Caretti said. "You're a predator and danger to society and all of our children."

Assistant prosecutor Davis said the graphic nature of the photos showing Myers engaging in sexual acts with the boys "sickened me."

"This is the most horrific case I've prosecuted (in six years)," Davis told the judge.

No one representing the victims attended the sentencing as both families wanted to remain anonymous, Davis said.

Both families of victims supported the plea agreement to avoid the "torment" of the boys having to testify, Davis said.

Investigators suspect Myers may have had access to other victims because he worked with troubled youth at a northern Michigan facility, and volunteered to work indirectly with youths at a Washington Township church. However, no other victims have been discovered. He and his wife, who also worked at the northern Michigan group home, were fired.

Myers' wife did not attend the hearing. She has filed for support payments from him for their two children.

His father-in-law did attend but declined to comment.

Both the defense attorney Freers and Davis said Myers likely will serve more than the 20 years because the Michigan Department of Corrections' parole board usually rejects first and second parole requests from sex offenders.

Myers could have received up to life in prison for the first-degree criminal sexual conduct offense, for which he was sentenced to 15 to 60 years. It will run concurrently with sentences for second-degree CSC, child sexually abusive activity, distribution of images of child sexually abusive activity and possession of images of sexually abusive material.

He was sentenced to five to 20 years for using a computer to commit a crime, and to a smaller term for a lesser level of using a computer to commit a crime.

## **Band director stands mute to CSC charges**

TRACI ANDERSON-WEISENBACH, The Huron Daily Tribune 12/12/2005

SANILAC COUNTY — Cass City Public Schools Band Director Doug Burtch appeared in Sanilac County District Court Friday afternoon for his arraignment and stood mute on charges of criminal sexual conduct.

According to Burtch's attorney, Walt Salens of Bad Axe, Burtch's preliminary examination has been set for 10 a.m. Jan. 20 in Sanilac County District Court.

Judge James Marcus ordered a \$25,000 personal recognizance bond, which is to assure Burtch will return to the court as scheduled. He does not have to post the \$25,000 bond unless he does not return to court, Salens said.

Burtch is being charged with two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, which is a 15-year felony, and two alternate counts of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, a two-year misdemeanor. The charges are related to incidents that allegedly occurred from December 2003 through May 2004.

The allegations have been made by a Cass City student who has since graduated.

Burtch was suspended from his band director position in July. The board hired interim substitute Band Director Todd Thamer in August to fill in during Burtch's absence.

Salens said Friday he had just received the police report from the prosecuting attorney's office and had not had an opportunity to review it.

He said the complaint against Burtch "is vague" in regard to when the alleged incidents took place.

Because he hadn't reviewed the police reports, Salens declined to comment further.

According to Detective/Sgt. Brian Ferguson of the Michigan State Police Sandusky post, the alleged incidents took place in Sanilac County, which is why the case is being handled in that county.

# Husband Pleads Guilty to Sex Assault of Child

By GRETCHEN RUETHLING  
The New York Times

Published: December 14, 2005

A 22-year-old man charged earlier this year with the equivalent of statutory rape after impregnating his 13-year-old girlfriend, whom he later married, pleaded guilty yesterday to first-degree sexual assault of a child.

The defendant, Matthew Koso of Falls City, Neb., is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Daniel E. Bryan Jr. of Richardson County District Court on Feb. 7 and could face up to 50 years in prison.

Mr. Koso had pleaded not guilty but decided to change his plea because he was unsure how a jury would decide the case, his mother, Peggy Koso, said in a telephone interview from the Falls City home that she and her husband share with Mr. Koso, his wife and their baby daughter, Samara.

"We feel that we made the best decision possible," Ms. Koso said. "Hopefully, the judge will look at all the circumstances, and, hopefully, he'll get probation."

Mr. Koso and his wife, Crystal, began dating in September 2003, when he was 20 and she was 12. They were married in May in Hiawatha, Kan., with their parents' blessing. Their daughter was born in August.

In Nebraska, it is illegal for anyone under 17 to marry, and for anyone 19 or older to have sex with someone younger than 16.

Kansas has no minimum age for marrying, but requires anyone under 18 to have parental or judicial consent. The Kansas Legislature will consider a bill next month that would establish a minimum marriage age of 16.

Nebraska's attorney general, Jon Bruning, who filed the charge against Mr. Koso in July, said he thought Mr. Koso's sentence would "come down to how sympathetic he will seem to the judge." "Guilt and innocence were not really at issue here," Mr. Bruning said. "It's clear that he violated the statute."



Mr. Bruning's spokeswoman, Regan Anson, said that in Nebraska, first-degree sexual assault of a child was the same charge as statutory rape in most other states.

Mr. Bruning said prison time for Mr. Koso would discourage others from having consensual sex with minors, who, he added, were too young to grasp the possible impact of their actions.

"We don't let our children drink alcohol," he said. "We don't let them drive a car. We don't let them join the military. We don't let them smoke. The issue is, did a grown man have sex with a child?"

"You have to have consequences for your actions," Mr. Bruning said. "I believe this is a very serious crime."

Mr. Koso's lawyer, Willis Yoesel, said he would try to convince Judge Bryan that Mr. Koso was not a sexual predator, and that he would be a good candidate for probation based on his character and his lack of a criminal history.

"There's a lot of trauma involved" in a jury trial, Mr. Yoesel said. "Sometimes you don't know if you're going to be better off. "

## Kids with parents in prison need mentors who care

I'm forever fretting about the children nobody loves enough to protect from loaded guns, to shield from hunger or to snatch out of hot, locked cars.

Now I have another group of kids to add to my worry list: the children of prison inmates.

I get letters from their fathers all the time. They're in prisons lifting weights, gobbling up books, pouring out poems, publishing newsletters, filing briefs and even founding religions.

I can't help wondering how much sorrow their children will sip in strange kitchens.

Michelle Soucy worries about this, too. That's why she's trying to fill a program designed to help the children of inmates from Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

Mentors are needed

Soucy is the interim program director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit. And the program she wants to expand is called "Mentoring Children of Promise."

It's a free program for youngsters ages 7-14 whose parents are imprisoned. The organization has 175 slots in its mentoring program for people willing to work with inmates' children, but only 75 are filled.

The group needs 100 more adult male and female volunteers with reliable transportation who will spend a few hours a month with these youngsters for at least one year. For information, call (248) 569-0600.

According to Soucy, children whose parents have been jailed are 70 percent more likely than other children to wind up in prison themselves.

"It's the kids who serve the harshest sentence," she says.

Her words forced me to think about all the ways in which having imprisoned parents might rock children's lives.

Such children might be uprooted from familiar homes. They might be placed with foster parents or relatives overwhelmed by their own problems. They might find themselves drowning in pools of grief, fear, loneliness, guilt, depression and plunging self-esteem. They might also withdraw from family members and friends.

They might develop deep-seated fears of being abandoned and have trouble sleeping or eating. They are more likely than other youngsters to become aggressive and lose interest in school.

And they are most likely to join gangs, snort or smoke drugs and become pregnant at an early age.

Mentor is like Santa

I can see where an adult mentor, someone who shows up month after month, could give such children a feeling that their shaky lives rest on at least a chunk of stable ground. "A mentor is like a Santa to a lonely child,"

Soucy says.

Mentors, who must be at least 18, do simple things like taking children fishing, shopping, bowling and to baseball games, zoos and ice skating rinks.

In the process, children often gain knowledge, confidence, a sense of being special and the strength to deal with swirling emotions.

But programs like this are more than exercises in humanity and compassion.

They're the best kind of anti-crime programs, lessening the chances that yet another young man or woman will wind up reading, exercising, filing briefs, crafting poems and praying behind bars.

You can reach Betty DeRamus at (313) 222-2296 or [bderamus@detnews.com](mailto:bderamus@detnews.com).

# **New Problems in Medicare Drug Benefit**

By ROBERT PEAR

Published: December 14, 2005

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13 - Insurers reported government delays in handling applications for Medicare's new prescription drug benefit on Tuesday, and they said the delays could create problems for some beneficiaries when the coverage became available next month.

Because of the delays, insurance executives said, they have not been able to issue identification cards to some who want to enroll, and they cannot guarantee that cards will be sent to all people who sign up before Jan. 1, when the program begins.

Pharmacists said that some beneficiaries might have difficulty taking advantage of the new drug benefit if they showed up at pharmacies next month without identification cards. In any event, the druggists said, the lack of cards could create complications for pharmacists and increase uncertainty in the first weeks of the program.

The source of the problem was not immediately clear. Insurance executives said they understood that the federal government had had technical problems with one of its computer systems. But Gary R. Karr, a spokesman for the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said, "We have found errors in data submitted by some of the plans." In some cases, Mr. Karr said, "we kick back the applications" so the errors can be corrected.

On Tuesday, President Bush urged older Americans to sign up for the drug benefit and noted concerns about the complexity of the program. In a brief visit to a retirement community in Springfield, Va., Mr. Bush said it was "a daunting task" for some Medicare beneficiaries to sort through the many new prescription drug plans offered by private insurers. But he said they should sign up for the new coverage because it was "a good deal for our seniors."

The drug benefit is available to all 42 million Medicare beneficiaries. Enrollment, which is voluntary, began Nov. 15. Coverage starts next month for those who sign up by Dec. 31.

Dr. John W. Rowe, the chairman of Aetna, one of the nation's largest insurers, said his company had sent the government information on people who filled out enrollment forms indicating they wanted to obtain drug coverage from Aetna. But, Dr. Rowe said, in many cases, the government has yet to reply and has not verified that the people are eligible, so Aetna has not been able to issue identification cards.

"We send additional names to the government every day," Dr. Rowe said in an interview, "but the government has not verified the names."

Dr. Rowe said he believed that Medicare officials were "working hard to fix the problem."

The Medicare agency is supposed to confirm that a person is eligible to enroll in the program by sending the insurer an electronic document known as a transaction reply report.

Angela Feig, a spokeswoman for a consortium of Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans offering drug coverage in Iowa, North and South Dakota and four other Midwestern states, said they had received applications from 89,000 Medicare beneficiaries. But Ms. Feig said: "We have not sent out any identification cards. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has to conduct a verification process to confirm that applicants are eligible to enroll. We are working with the government to complete that process."

Robert E. Meehan, vice president of Horizon Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Jersey, said, "Medicare is way behind in sending out documents to validate members' eligibility."

As result, Mr. Meehan said, "we are behind" in sending out cards.

Mr. Meehan said the delays increased the possibility of problems at pharmacies in early January. "When members walk into a pharmacy," he said, "we want them to have a good experience. We want this to go well on Jan. 1."

Mr. Karr, the Medicare spokesman, said pharmacists could use a computer terminal to verify the enrollment of beneficiaries who did not have cards. Mr. Meehan said beneficiaries could also "present a letter at the pharmacy" showing they had signed up.

But E. Timothy Marks, co-owner of Excel Drug, a pharmacy in Waldport, Ore., said, "It will certainly be easier if Medicare beneficiaries have their cards."

Congress had assumed that beneficiaries would be grateful for the new coverage, but many have had difficulty evaluating the options. In most states, people have a choice of more than three dozen drug plans, with different premiums, deductibles, co-payments and lists of covered drugs.

Mr. Bush emphasized that "the new Medicare plan is voluntary, it's optional." In addition, he told the audience of retirees, "There are people around who are willing to help explain the program."

# Medicare squeezes out doctors, AMA leader says

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

By Ron Cammel  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Lagging Medicare payments to doctors have driven private practices out of business, and federal rules will make the situation much worse, said American Medical Association President J. Edward Hill.

Speaking to about 30 local physicians at DeVos Place on Tuesday, Hill said Medicare payments will be cut 26 percent over the next six years under Congress' plan. Meanwhile, overhead costs will rise up to 17 percent.

"Most doctors run small businesses ... They can't lose much money," Hill said at a luncheon sponsored by the Michigan State Medical Association. "It will worsen the problems for seniors." He predicts severe effects:

Many doctors will not accept new Medicare patients. An AMA survey shows 22 percent of Medicare patients cannot find a doctor.

The industry will not invest in new technology and equipment, lowering the quality of care. A doctor shortage will worsen. He said 2,000 more doctors a year are needed to meet future demand.

Hill, a Tupelo, Miss., family physician, said he urges doctors to contact lawmakers to explain the problems. Unless Congress acts, Medicare payments in 2014 will be a little more than half of the level of 1991, he said.

Grand Rapids doctor David Randolph the message is getting out.

Randolph said Medicare cuts and high overhead drove him out of his private practice in Midland, despite working 60 to 80 hours a week and having his wife work without pay.

He now works for Michigan Medical PC as a hospitalist at Spectrum Health and says family doctors will not be able to survive under the current climate.

"I get a little bit hot about it," he said. "I don't know if the general public is aware of this."

In addition to better funding, Hill said Congress needs to quit tying Medicare payments to fluctuations in gross domestic product and should ensure fairness.

He also said having 46 million Americans uninsured and another 10 million or so underinsured is "a national disgrace."

The AMA promotes giving tax credits that can be used only on insurance, while insurance companies would compete rather than design national plans, Hill said.

He said preventable problems gobble half the \$800 billion a year spent on care.

"We need to go back to primary prevention and start in kindergarten," he said. "If we teach good choices in kindergarten to third grade, they are much more likely to make good choices."

# **Stabenow: Health care needs urgent attention**

## **Senator says manufacturing will continue to suffer without reforms.**

PUBLISHED: December 14, 2005

By Chad Selweski  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Sen. Debbie Stabenow said Tuesday that falling wages and rising health care costs threaten to destroy Michigan's middle-class standard of living.

As companies slash worker benefits and manufacturers struggle with the competitive disadvantage of escalating health care expenses, Stabenow said Washington still lacks a sense of urgency about the economic damage taking place.

Speaking to a group of about 100 doctors, nurses and administrators at St. John Macomb Hospital in Warren, Stabenow said the White House and many in Congress see little need to revise the nation's employer-based system of providing health insurance.

"We spend twice as much of our GDP, our gross domestic product, on health care as any other country, but we have 45 million uninsured people. There is something wrong with this picture," said the Lansing Democrat. "I wish we could say we're spending twice as much and getting twice as much health care."

While many in Congress want to cut federal funding for Medicaid or revise Medicare, Stabenow, who faces re-election in 2006, is pushing health care reforms that would trim costs without cutting services.

One bill would invest in greater use of computers and the Internet for hospital record-keeping and day-to-day operations, which would reduce paperwork and save an estimated \$300 billion a year in administrative costs.

A second bill would create a national insurance pool to protect employers from high insurance premiums associated with "catastrophic" illnesses suffered by workers. Stabenow said General Motors projected that eliminating its catastrophic cases could lower the automaker's health care costs by 23 percent.

A third piece of legislation, long championed Stabenow, would allow the reimportation of less costly prescription drugs from Canada.

In an interview with The Macomb Daily, Stabenow said health care fixes

are part of a broader agenda to revive the nation's manufacturing sector. If the Delphi Corp. bankruptcy sets the course, she said, economic globalization will be the motive cited by many industrial companies for slashing the income that fuels middle class America.

Less jobs, lower wages, fewer benefits and minimal pensions are "a prescription for disaster," said the first-term senator.

"To say it's all about people in our country earning too much -- that's the wrong debate," she said. "We ... are in a fight for our way of life."

The Michigan congressional delegation has pursued a manufacturing agenda that lawmakers say is designed to "level the playing field" for the auto industry and other industrial sectors. That agenda calls for tougher enforcement of trade laws, cracking down on counterfeit goods manufactured overseas, pension reforms and lowering health care costs. Stabenow said the effort hasn't made sufficient progress because the White House and the Republican leadership in Congress believe market forces must be allowed to work in the manufacturing sector shakeout. She faulted the Big Three automakers and their suppliers for a lack of lobbying effort.

"There's a very laissez-faire attitude (in Washington) -- whatever happens, happens," she said. "We ... need a loud, unified voice coming from the auto industry."

# Bad timing at FOC

Jackson Citizen Patriot Editorial

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

What, exactly, will employees at Jackson's Friend of the Court office be doing Friday? A shutdown of a state computer database means they won't be looking at child-support cases. Payments won't be tallied. If you call with a question about your account, the answer you'll likely get is: "Sorry."

Here's a more pertinent question: At the state Department of Human Services -- the Friend of the Court's parent -- what were they thinking?

The computer blackout is to allow for an upgrade of a system that's been plagued with glitches the last two years. Fair enough. But the timing, a week before Christmas, puts an undue strain on families. Between normal bills and holiday shopping, this is arguably the most critical time of year for parents to be sure their finances are in order. Child-support checks need to be handled on time, and questions need to be answered.

By Monday, the computer system will let case workers look at files. By Tuesday, everything should return to normal. We can only hope that the four days of disruption don't create major headaches for families or dampen their holidays.

The Friend of the Court touches many thousands of families in an intensely personal way. The people who make decisions there should not forget that.



## **WRAP UP OF WHAT ELSE THE HOUSE DID 'TIL ALMOST 2 A.M.**

The House, amid a series of caucuses throughout its 14-hour session, also took up a series of bills before it closed out the year. Action on the legislation is below.

**TORTURE:** The specific use of torture would be punishable by up to life in prison under a bill ([HB 5268](#)) the House ordered enrolled after it concurred in a Senate substitute Tuesday.

“The Legislature has sent the governor a comprehensive bill that will effectively prosecute anyone who would torture another human being in Michigan,” the bill’s sponsor, [Rep. Tom Meyer](#) (R-Bad Axe) said. “The bill could be used as a national model to help discourage these types of terrible acts throughout the country.”

[Rep. John Espinoza](#) (D-Croswell), who introduced similar legislation this year, said, “Jury selection began today for the case that inspired me to propose anti-torture legislation, so it’s very fitting that this package was approved today. I’m proud that the fight I began in July is nearly complete. The victims of people who torture will finally get the justice they deserve, and those who torture others will finally get their due.”

Mr. Espinoza was referring to a recent case in Huron County where a man was charged with kidnapping and abusing his wife because there was no law against torture. The man repeatedly asphyxiated her to the point that she would black out and then he would revive her.

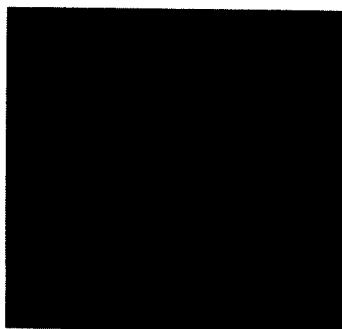
**STUDENT SAFETY ZONES:** A bill that makes technical amendments to the Sex Offenders Registration Act ([HB 5397](#)) to state that a person would be convicted of a felony if that person violated the ban on working or loitering in a student safety zone and had one or more prior convictions previously was ordered enrolled after the House stripped out language that would have created a loophole to the law for attorneys who are registered sex offenders and also represent juveniles in courts near schools.

**NON-PROFIT HOUSING:** The House found contention on a bill that would provide tax exemptions to one non-profit organization that supplies housing to low-income residents ([HB 5487](#)). Because of a local decision to not allow for an exemption, the organization could go bankrupt because its properties are viewed as commercial,

therefore, taxable properties, said the bill's sponsor Rep. Joe June (R-Hamburg). But some Democrats found the bill too limited in its scope, saying the same opportunity for tax exemptions should apply to more profits. Others were upset that the bill was introduced in last week, had no hearing in committee and was being voted on Tuesday. The legislation passed on a 70-37 vote.

**CHILD CUSTODY:** Off to the governor's desk are two bills that would deny permanent changes in a child custody order against a parent because actively serving in the military duty (HB 5100 and SB 714). Temporary changes could still be made, but a formal hearing would be held on permanent changes when the parent returned from duty.

**MEDICAID RECOVERY:** Legislation that would help the state recover money in Medicaid funds because of a whistleblower, while at the same time protecting that person from retaliation is now on its way to the governor's desk. The House concurred in a Senate substitute that would provide the Attorney General's office 28 days to review and dispose of the case. The vote was 104-2, with Reps. Scott Hummel (R-DeWitt) and Bruce Caswell (R-Hillsdale) dissenting.



NEWS: Opinion

Petoskey News Review

## **We support energy plan**

*Tuesday, December 13, 2005 3:06 PM EST*

Ouch. This winter season is going to be a tough one on many Northern Michigan families.

With home heating bills expected to go through the roof, we support an emergency energy plan introduced into the state Legislature recently, sponsored in part by Rep. Gary McDowell, D-Rudyard, who represents Emmet County.

The Democratic-supported plan includes a package of five bills expected to be introduced in the House.

Key components of the package include banning utilities from shutting off heat to homes during winter months, providing payment assistance through emergency funds and offering incentives to help families make their homes more energy efficient.

We agree with McDowell when he said, "Michigan families deserve relief from the harsh cold of winter and financial hardships, and that's what this legislation does."

It is indeed going to be a tough winter for many residents. The Michigan Public Service Commission announced recently that natural gas heating bills will jump 46 percent, or \$59 a month on average. The average winter bill in 2005-06 is projected to be close to \$200, the MPSC reports.

That means many families will be struggling to ensure their homes are safe and warm for their children and their elderly parents. McDowell calls it an "emergency situation."

We don't want to see the utility companies penalized with bills that go unpaid. But we also don't want to see Michigan residents - children, adults, elderly - die because of lack of heat caused by the inability to pay. This is a crisis, and something needs to be done.

Specifically, the proposed legislation would:

- Ban utility companies from shutting off heat service during winter, specifically between Dec. 1, 2005, and March 31, 2006, to households earning 200 percent above the poverty level, or approximately \$40,000 for a family of four.
- Provide additional funding for energy assistance funds;
- Give the MPSC the power to shift \$5 million from research into a fund to help people pay heating bills. It would put more money into the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); expand LIHEAP eligibility from 110 percent of the poverty level to 125 percent; and give recipients more money, from an average \$210 a year to \$250.
- Set up a database to coordinate volunteers willing to help with winterization efforts; and,
- Give residents a tax deduction if they winterize their homes. People who winterize their homes and install energy-efficient appliances can get 50 percent of their expenses back in tax credits, up to \$2,500. The credit is available to households that make up to 300 percent of the poverty level, or approximately \$58,000 for a family of four.

We hope both Republicans and Democrats see the worthiness of this emergency plan and enact its components to help Michigan residents this winter.

# Hunger fighters coming through

## Food bank donations ahead of last year's

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

By Kristin Longley

klongley@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6249

FLINT - Despite big obstacles this year, the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan is within reach of its holiday campaign goal.

Just halfway through its annual Face of Hunger campaign, the food bank is more than three-quarters of the way to its \$500,000 goal. It is 20 percent ahead of last year's pace, a startling achievement given the economic gloom facing many Delphi Corp. and General Motors workers.

Food bank President Bill Kerr said every part of the campaign has shown a fundraising increase this year. For example, he said, charitable donations from the general public total \$284,000 so far.

That just shows how generous the community is, Kerr said.

"It is truly amazing to think our community could rally to the support of the food bank," he said. "We still have a tremendous amount to raise, but it really is amazing."

Especially since the food bank can supply \$14 worth of food for every \$1 it receives. From cash sent in with Flint Journal envelopes to the sale of food bank holiday ornaments, charitable givers have gone above and beyond to fight hunger. Even local fast-food restaurants are doing their part, Kerr said.

Kerr said when he walked into Big John's Steak and Onion, 3485 Fenton

Road, Burton, he saw the walls and windows were covered in a sea of red food bank holiday ornaments, which are displayed with the donor's name after a donation is made.

The workers aim to display at least 2,000 ornaments by the end of the campaign, which would be a big help to the food bank at a \$1 donation per ornament.

Kerr also said most of the food bank's usual givers are increasing their gifts. He's seen traditional donations of \$25 transform into \$50 and corporate donations of \$5,000 turn into \$10,000.

"It just shows the true spirit of people," Kerr said. "As times get tough, the community knows the food bank can leverage those dollars."

### QUICK TAKE

By the numbers

The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan is close to reaching its holiday campaign goal.

### CURRENT

TALLY: \$384,898.

GOAL: \$500,000.

The drive is about 20 percent ahead of last year's total at this time.

The general public alone has donated about \$284,000.

# Drive to succeed Paragon students show they're on task with latest food drive

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

By Jessi De La Cruz  
jdelacruz@citpat.com -- 768-4918

When students at Paragon Charter Academy are given a task they know how to get it done -- whether it's math, reading or an impromptu canned-food drive.

The 630-student school collected more than 3,000 food items last week after Trinity Wesleyan Church asked for help filling its pantry. Church officials picked up the bags and boxes of food Monday after school leaders gathered and counted the cargo.

Mary Beers, the church's director of benevolence, was stunned by the size of the load she found at Paragon.

"I walked in the room, and I was blown away," said Beers, who oversees the church's food pantry. "I said, 'I need to get out of here and get a pickup truck.'"

Beers asked Paragon to hold a food drive because donations have been down since Hurricane Katrina hit the South in August. With many months of winter ahead and a shaky economy, Beers was worried about running out.

"It's been hard to keep the shelves stocked," Beers said. "Families don't have money to pay their bills and feed their kids."

Asking Paragon to hold a food drive made sense because the school and the church established a partnership last year to work together, Beers said. However, she didn't expect such a huge response.

"This will get us over the hump," she said. "It goes fast. It just depends on the need."

Principal Kathy Watson said activities benefiting the community teach students about volunteer work.

"One of the things we try to teach the kids is the need to consider others," Watson said. "It's not always about them."

The class with the most food items earned a pizza lunch compliments of Fazoli's Restaurant.

Charles Hunt's third-grade students collected 460 food items alone, the most schoolwide -- about 18 items per student in his class of 24.

"It's about people who need help and are less fortunate," Hunt said. "They really hung onto those words and just went from there."

Eight-year-old Trevor Ward contributed cans of carrots, corn and spaghetti sauce to the cause.

"There were lots of things we weren't going to eat and I heard about this and wanted to help," Trevor said.

Third-grader Kimmy Berry said she was glad she donated and was excited about the pizza lunch.

"I think it's a good idea for us to be able to help them," Kimmy said.

## **A tradition of caring and sharing**

The Huron Daily Tribune 12/12/2005

Volunteers braved temperatures in the teens Saturday morning to meet at the Huron County Farm Bureau building in Bad Axe for the annual Care and Share food delivery. Trucks were loaded with frozen turkeys, bags of potatoes, fruit and other necessities. Packages were delivered to area families in time for holiday dinners.

*Oakland Briefs*  
*Detroit News*  
*December 14, 2005*

**Davisburg**

## Food drive to help feed the needy

Cub Scout Pack No. 220, Sherman Middle School in Holly, Springfield Chiropractic and the Davisburg Elementary Pre-School all organized food drives and generously donated thousands of pounds of canned goods and nonperishable items to Neighbor for Neighbor's food pantry in downtown Davisburg. Every Wednesday from 10 a.m. until 1:30 p.m., low-income families receive a cart full of groceries.

Please call (248) 634-0900 for details.



# One special shopping spree for kids, heroes

TRACI ANDERSON-WEISENBACH, The Huron Daily Tribune 12/08/2005

**BAD AXE** — A group of about 60 shoppers converged upon the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Bad Axe Tuesday, Christmas gift lists in hand, to find the perfect gifts for loved ones. These shoppers weren't your ordinary Christmas consumers, though — they included local children shopping for their families with the help of some local dignitaries.

The second annual Shop with a Hero event joined 35 students with 25 heroes, and their mission was to find presents for students' family members. Each student had a list of people to buy for, and the heroes helped them find what they were looking for. Heroes included police officers from every school district in Huron County, and each police officer brought a student with him or her. Heroes also included Sgt. Ryan Eugster and Capt. Elijah Rosenthal from the U.S. Army; Huron County 9-1-1 Central Dispatch representatives; officers from the Huron County Sheriff's Office and the Michigan State Police; emergency medical technicians; Huron County Road Commission representatives; Michigan Department of Natural Resources representatives; and teachers.

Ryan Leppek, Wal-Mart store manager, said Shop with a Hero is a community involvement project through Wal-Mart and Pepsi, who donate funds to be able to pay for the gifts the students purchase. The spending limit for each child is \$50 to \$100, depending on the size of the child's family.

Leppek said he enjoys watching children choose their gifts and carefully keep track of how much they're spending.

"They're more worried about what to get for their family than what to get for themselves," he said.

Once the children and heroes finished shopping and went through the checkout line, Wal-Mart employees and others wrapped the gifts for them. The only thing left for the kids to do was to place the gifts under the tree and wait until Christmas to see their family members' reactions.

The students involved in Shop with a Hero are referred by the schools. Jeni Campbell, school nurse with Bad Axe Public Schools, and Marc Bridson, school liaison officer, organized the event.

"It's great that Wal-Mart and Pepsi come up with the funds to do this," Bridson said. "Hopefully we can keep it up."

Eugster, an Ubly native who now lives in Bad Axe, shopped with Donnie Baker, 9, of Ubly. Donnie bought several gifts for family and friends. Eugster encouraged Donnie to buy something for himself, so Donnie chose a Spiderman video game. When Donnie said he wasn't sure how to hook the game up to his television, Eugster and a store employee helped him choose the right equipment for the connection.

Donnie said he enjoyed shopping with Eugster, but he didn't have to say a word. The big smile on his face said it all.

Eugster said he just returned from Iraq three weeks ago. He had served there for 12 months. He's been in the Army for almost eight years. He and his wife, Carrie, have two boys, Sean, 4, and Adam, 2.

Before serving in Iraq, Eugster had been substitute teaching and was finishing his student teaching in Bad Axe. He heard about Shop with a Hero from a school employee and decided to participate, as it was an opportunity for him to get back to the normal everyday life he'd been away from for so long. He hadn't been shopping for quite a long time, so he had to get a bit acclimated to the store's layout as he helped Donnie with Christmas shopping.

Eugster said Shop with a Hero is very beneficial for children.

"It gives kids who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity the chance to get out and shop for their families," he said.

©Huron Daily Tribune 2005

# **Funds still needed to Meet the Needs**

By Don Reid-Coldwater Daily Reporter Staff Writer

December 14, 2005

COLDWATER — With the critical winter months here the Branch County United Way has reached only 66 percent of its “goal” to Meet the Needs in 2006 and many agencies funded by United Way will feel the shortfall.

“Winter has descended upon Branch County. Many residents are concerned about keeping their children warm and safe. The elderly are especially vulnerable to the effects of the cold,” Branch County United Way executive director, Robin Glascock, noted.

Teresa Yohe of the Community Action Agency said, “So far this winter, we are hurting,” adding that 2005 funding is running low, and appeals for help with utilities are becoming more numerous as winter sets in.

# Salvation Army drive continues

By: Monroe Evening News staff

Story updated December 13. 2005 11:17AM

The Salvation Army's annual kettle drive needs a quick boost to avoid falling behind for the year.

Maj. Jimmy Wilson, commander of the Monroe County Salvation Army, said Monday that the annual Christmas drive is falling a little behind last year's amount.

"I am confident the citizens of Monroe County will come through in order to assist their fellow citizens who are in great need," Maj. Wilson said. "We are approximately \$9,500 short of where we were last year at this time."

The Salvation Army's annual goal is \$210,000. Officials report donations of \$47,000 toward that goal thus far. The money is used for food baskets, clothing, toys and services provided by the agency year-round. That includes lodging, food, clothing, prescriptions, utility assistance, rental assistance and other services.

"If we do not meet our goal, we will have to look at cutting services to the poor," Maj. Wilson said. "We believe this will not be necessary as everyone partners with us in the last few weeks of our Christmas campaign. Together, we will meet the need at the point of need."

Anyone wishing to donate to the Salvation Army may mail donations to 815 E. First St., Monroe. Donations may also be placed in a red kettle. For additional information, call 241-0440.

PUBLISHED: Wednesday, December 14, 2005

## **Spreading some good fortune Tribal members sending truckloads of cheer across the nation**

By MARK RANZENBERGER

Sun Staff Write

Christmas is on its way from Mt. Pleasant to 170 children on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, and 183 children closer to home.

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's Seniors Program is sending a truckload of Christmas packages to the Lakota children on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The Angel Tree program takes gifts and donations from Tribal members and employees, and sends them to needy Native children.

"We are the ones who have been blessed," said Louanne Brunner of the Seniors Program. While some Tribes, including the Saginaw Chippewa, have found prosperity through gaming and other enterprises, many Native people remain caught in grinding poverty.

Brunner said the Pine Ridge gift packages are headed toward 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds served by the eight Head Start centers on the 2.7 million acre reserve in southwest South Dakota.

"We get a wish list," Brunner said. "Three things of need, two things of want."

The "needs" often include basics such as hats, gloves, boots and mittens.

"We had elders who made 11 handmade quilts," Brunner said.

The same kind of list came together for children in Michigan and Canadian Native communities. A gift package destined for a 9-year-old girl in Bay City, for example, included boots, a coat and hat, gloves, and a Bratz doll and car.

Other "wants" had deeper meanings. A 12-year-old Ojibwe boy from Michigan – not a member of the Saginaw Chippewas – dances at pow wows, and requested a fan for the dances.

Tribal member Matthew Pamp said his wife, Judy Pamp, and her daughter, Dayna Lada, heard about the request and responded with a full set of royal blue regalia, including ankle bells, head gear and ties.

"We said if we're going to make a fan, we're going to do it right," Matthew Pamp said.

Many Angel Tree donors gave cash, and Brunner said that resulted in some major orders from the Mt. Pleasant Kmart. Last week, she and several volunteers checked out six shopping baskets full, and she took another five shopping carts through the checkout Monday.

Volunteers from the Tribe as well as from Central Michigan University and Montcalm Community College spend several days wrapping the gifts.

Brunner said the donors recognize that without the Angel Tree gifts, "those kids wouldn't have a Christmas."

# Seasonal giving benefits community all year

Daily Tribune Staff

PUBLISHED: December 13, 2005

Give-A-Christmas Year Around is three weeks into its 2005 holiday campaign to raise money for nine local human service agencies.

Donations to this year's campaign will help homeless kids go to class with warm coats and new supplies, disabled adults get job training, foster children find loving homes and battered women get safe haven.

The Judson Center, HAVEN, Troy People Concerned, the South Oakland Shelter, Community Services of Oakland, the Boys and Girls Club of South Oakland County, South Oakland YMCA, Common Ground Sanctuary and the Salvation Army all benefit from Give A Christmas — and there's usually a little left over to help another deserving charity or two.

Together, the groups help the homeless, abused women and children, abandoned or foster children, people with emotional or mental impairment, low-income families, even those who've temporarily fallen on hard economic times and need a little boost to get back on their feet.

Give-A-Christmas organizations are all local agencies that help people in this area. Since there are no administrative costs, donations go to the people who need it most.

We would be happy to announce your contributions, along with your city of residence and a greeting or memory.

Checks should be made to "Give-A-Christmas Year Around" and sent to:

Give-A-Christmas

c/o Daily Tribune

210 E. Third St.

Royal Oak, MI 48067

Until the end of the year, we'll bring readers stories of Give-A-Christmas' generous donors, along with the agencies and people helped by the charity.

We hope the tales warm hearts this holiday season and spur action on behalf of those who need it the most.

# Donations, pledges thrill United Way leaders

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

MARY L. LAWRENCE  
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Victory was extra sweet for Cherrie Benchley, United Way of Saginaw County's new CEO. She couldn't decide which was more exciting -- surpassing this year's \$2.8 million fundraising goal or her husband's arrival home after serving for eight months in Iraq. For the first time since 2000, the charity surpassed its target, collecting \$2,903,248, some \$100,000 over the top.

That amount will increase as additional donations arrive through the end of April. Benchley and Herb A. Spence III, this year's campaign chairman, announced the results during a victory celebration today at Zehnder's of Frankenmuth.

Benchley's husband, Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth S. Benchley, 58, returned home Tuesday for a 14-day leave before he will return to Iraq, where he has served since April with the 1071st U.S. Army National Guard.

"It's been an exciting month," said Benchley, who became United Way president and chief executive officer a few weeks ago. "I'm glad he's home, but this is one celebration I wouldn't miss for anything."

About 150 campaign volunteers, agency directors and supporters participated in the victory celebration. The goal reflected a much leaner target than in past years, as the county's largest charity tightened its purse strings. The \$2.8 million goal was about \$300,000 less than the 2004 collection of \$3.1 million, which was 91 percent of the goal.

Benchley said donations were down by 17 percent among Delphi Corp. employees, to \$649,000 from \$785,000 in 2004, but the drop was offset somewhat by a \$20,000 corporate contribution.

"We're waiting for the left shoe to drop on the Delphi situation," she said. "Everyone makes a pledge with the intention of paying, but those pledges are tied into the hours of work."

Delphi, which employs 6,800 hourly and salaried workers in Saginaw County, declared bankruptcy Oct. 8 and wants its unionized workers to take a drastic pay cut.

Despite butting heads with several union officials this year, Benchley praised the long, supportive ties between union workers and the charity.

"The United Way's relationship with union workers has been a large part of the campaign for many years," she said. "We've counted on them for as much as 40 percent of our collections over the years. If they should ever need assistance from the agencies they have supported all these years, we'll be there for them, too."

"This victory was a coordinated effort involving our staff, volunteers and the community. They all stepped up, even with job losses, the tsunami and Hurricane Katrina disasters, and the poor economy."

Spence said a goal was to find new donors "to sow seeds for future years." About two dozen businesses gave to the United Way for the first time, while some 30 businesses collected more than in 2004.

"We are thrilled," he said. "It's overwhelming how much support this community generated. Those people turned out in the belief they needed to give. We're grateful. The community deserves to celebrate."

Larry Sims, United Way board chairman, echoed those sentiments.

"It's wonderful news that we actually went over our goal," Sims said. "My hat goes off to the community as a whole."

The United Way provides funding for 24 nonprofit agencies that offer 54 initiatives ranging from family counseling to after-school programs. They include funding for three efforts through the YMCA of Saginaw, 1915 Fordney.

"Obviously, (the successful campaign) means the three United Way-funded programs at the Y will continue; it means no cuts," said an enthusiastic Tim Hilk, YMCA president and executive director.

"Our after-school program at Houghton (Elementary) School is 100 percent United Way-funded, and they give us money for youth memberships and summer day camp. Many of the kids can't participate without the assistance we get from United Way. I'm thrilled for the Y and for all the other agencies as well."

Rich Premo, president of Hidden Harvest, 940 E. Genesee, a food-gleaning organization serving Saginaw, Midland and Bay counties, said the campaign result is good news for hungry people.

"This literally helps us keep our trucks on the road," Premo said. "United Way provides 10 percent of our total budget. That means a lot to be able to count on those funds. It takes some of the pressure off. This will help us achieve our goal of 1.2 million pounds of food rescued and distributed in mid-Michigan."

"There are so many challenges out there right now. It's gratifying that the community came through; we should celebrate. When you do something good, you should say amen."

Mary L. Lawrence is a features and food writer for The Saginaw News. You may call her at 776-9676.



# Local charities say demand up, donations down

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

By George Jaksa  
gjaksa@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6332

GENESEE COUNTY - Local charities that rely on Christmas giving for much of their annual budgets are wondering if area donors are tapped out. "We are feeling the effects of the calamities in the United States and around the world," said Capt. John Williams, commander of the Salvation Army of Genesee County, who reported that its Red Kettle drive has collected \$30,000 to \$40,000 less than last year at the same time.

"Katrina and all the other disasters have left people pretty much tapped out," said Diane Moore, co-coordinator of the local annual Toys for Tots drive. She said donations at its more than 100 sites are running 35 percent to 40 percent below last year's pace.

Laurie Goff, executive director of Old Newsboys of Flint, said last week's Old Newsboys newspaper sale appears to be about \$100,000, compared to \$150,000 collected in 2004.

While donations are down, requests for assistance are up, the agencies reported.

At the Salvation Army, Williams said more than half of the requests for help are coming from people seeking assistance for the first time.

The Salvation Army hopes to assist about 1,500 families at Christmas. Its income also goes for year-round needs for food, shelter, clothing and other assistance.

The agency set a holiday campaign goal of \$600,000 after last year raising \$638,024, well over the 2004 goal of \$550,000. It hopes \$350,000 will come from the kettle drive and the rest from mail solicitations.

The mail campaign has been a bright spot. Williams said it is at the same pace as 2004, although he sees it tapering off as Christmas nears.

"What is probably happening with the kettles is that people gave earlier in the campaign but are passing them up now," Williams said. "Even if they would drop their small change in the kettles, that means a change in other people's lives."

Goff describes herself as "cautiously optimistic" that this year's drive, which began Nov. 7, will reach its \$400,000 goal.

"A lot of businesses are having in-house newspaper sales, selling popcorn and having raffles to help us," said Goff. "We are looking for funds to help us run year-around."

Moore said Toys for Tots is finding more requests for toys for older children, compared to those ages 3-10 in the past.

"More people are asking for basketballs and footballs," she said.

Last year the program served about 7,000 kids with three toys each, but Moore expects to have requests for 8,000 to 9,000 children this year.

## QUICK TAKE

Where to help  
SALVATION  
ARMY, 211 W.  
Kearsley St., Flint,  
48502, (810) 232-

2196  
OLD NEWSBOYS  
OF FLINT, 3216  
Lapeer Road, Flint,  
48503, (810) 744-  
1840

TOYS FOR TOTS,  
4425 S. Saginaw  
St., Flint, 48507,  
(810) 715-4401

# **Local church helps hurricane victims**

## **Parishioners, resident of Louisiana team up in efforts**

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

By Jaclyn Roeschke  
jroeschke@citpat.com -- 768-4945

A local church is teaming up with a New Orleans resident to deliver a truckload of holiday cheer to children affected by Hurricane Katrina.

St. John's Christian Service Group is collecting toys for the children through Saturday, when they will be transported by semi-trailer to Louisiana.

When a church parishioner volunteered for the Red Cross earlier this year, she met Louisiana resident Lily Duke, who has spearheaded an effort to give the toys to 19 schools in areas affected by the hurricane.

The toys will be taken to Louisiana, where Duke will distribute them to the schools.

Pat Gallagher, chairwoman of the Christian service group, said when the church heard what Duke was doing for hurricane victims, parishioners wanted to help.

"Our church always collects a lot of things at Christmas time for local families. But this year, with the hurricane, this cause was more pressing. It was just heart-wrenching," Gallagher said.

"These people have no way out of this -- many stores are closed, so they can't even get to them." Gallagher said the church group already has collected about \$2,000, which they will use to buy toys. Two large boxes of new toys have also been donated by the community.

The hurricane destroyed dozens of local schools, Duke said. Many of those public schools opened around Thanksgiving, and more will open Thursday, Duke said.

She has received donations from across the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

"There are some stores open, but the biggest thing is money. Because of damages to their homes, and with delay on getting insurance or (federal) assistance, they don't have the money," Duke said.

"I figured the best way to reach a majority of these kids is through the schools. It's just bad down here, so I've been gathering as many toys as possible."

Michigan

## **Inquiry sought on pensions for retirees the state rehire**

December 14, 2005

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF

FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU CHIEF

A state lawmaker said Tuesday that he will call for a task force to investigate how to curb what he called excessive public-employee pensions.

Rep. Andy Dillon, D-Redford Township, said he was spurred to action by a Free Press report published Tuesday that found that 83 state retirees have been rehired by the state and are collecting both a full pension and full-time paycheck.

Dillon said the state should take action against pension system abuses. He said he soon will introduce legislation to create an 11-member task force appointed by the Legislature and governor.

Dillon said he began drafting the bill earlier this year in response to another Free Press report that uncovered large pensions for Wayne County employees. Some retirees' pensions were more than what they earned while working.

Some school districts give early retirements to employees, then rehire them under contracts, paying them while they collect pensions, Dillon said. Such practices don't save taxpayers money statewide because those retirees draw from the state teacher retirement and health care funds, he said.

But Dillon said it would not be fair to ban government retirees from going back to work for other government agencies.

Contact **CHRIS CHRISTOFF** at 517-372-8660 or [christoff@freepress.com](mailto:christoff@freepress.com).

Michigan Report

December 13, 2005

## **CIVIL SERVICE APPROVES PAY INCREASES**

Non-union state employees can expect about a 4 percent pay increase in Fiscal Year 2006-07. The Civil Service Commission approved the pay increases Tuesday as well as bonuses for several classes of employee.

Non-exclusively represented employees would receive a 2 percent increase on October 1, 2006, the beginning of the fiscal year, and another 2 percent on April 8, 2007.

Some Department of Corrections employees would see special raises in addition to the across-the-board increases. Assistant resident unit supervisors and resident unit managers would receive 40 cents an hour and shift supervisors and security inspectors would see an additional 25 cents per hour on October 1, 2006, as a special increase.

Pharmacist managers with at least five years with the state would receive a \$1,500 retention bonus in December 2006.

For the current fiscal year, the commission also approved increasing dry cleaning allowances for Corrections shift supervisors and security inspectors to \$575 a year.

The commission rejected a proposal to increase pay for financial institution managers by 37 percent, but it did direct the department to work with the Office of Financial and Insurance Services to study compensation for those employees for the recommendation for the FY 2007-08 coordinated compensation proposal.